

# Kansas City Daily Journal

Kansas City, Mo., Sunday, June 19, 1881

## MORMON HISTORY

Col. Thomas Pitcher Gives the "Journal Readers His Recollections of

### MORMONISM IN THIS COUNTY

Events of the Memorable Year of 1833 by one of the Participants

Of the many pioneer citizens of Jackson county who were present and took part in the Mormon difficulties of the memorable year of 1833 but few now live. It is, however, fortunate for the historian that a few yet remain to relate the story of the events of those troublous times, nearly half a century ago, as they occurred, without prejudice. Among the very few of the pioneers still living is

#### COL. THOMAS PITCHER,

of Independence, who has been a citizen of Jackson county for almost fifty-five years, and who, during the troubles of 1833, was a colonel of the state militia, and took a prominent part in all of the events of the early history of the county. Knowing these facts, a Journal representative at Independence was sent to Col. Pitcher to interview him upon the Mormon history of Jackson county. After learning the object of the visit the colonel lighted his pipe and related the following facts.

"I came to Jackson county, Mo., in the month of November, 1826, and located four miles southwest of Independence. The Mormon immigration to the county commenced in the fall of 1830, and continued until the autumn of 1833. During the first two years of their residence in the county they and the citizens got along together very peaceably, and no one had any thought of a difficulty until the spring of 1833. In the latter part of 1831 the Mormons established a newspaper in Independence called the Morning and Evening Star, which was edited by one W. W. Phelps. This paper published the so-called revelations of Joseph Smith and other leading elders of the church, and other doctrines of their religion. The Mormons, as a rule, were an ignorant and fanatical people, though there were some very in-

telligent men among them. The troubles of 1833, which led to their expulsion from the county, were originated by these fanatics making boasts that they intended to possess the entire county, saying that God had promised it to them and they were going to have it. This of course caused ill feeling toward them, which continued to grow more and more bitter, until

#### THE FINAL UPRISING

took place. One Saturday, about the middle of July, 1833, a citizens' meeting was held at the court house in Independence, to declare what was to be done with the Mormons who were pouring into the county, and to devise some means to put a stop to their seditious boasts as to what they proposed to do, etc. This meeting determined to destroy the Mormon printing office, located a short distance south of where Chrisman & Sawyer's bank building now stands, which determination was carried into effect that afternoon."

"Did the citizens give the Mormons any notice of what they intended to do?"

"No, I don't think they gave them any notice whatever, but when they had determined upon destroying the printing office, they immediately proceeded to do so."

"Did the Mormons make any resistance?"

"No, they did not. Some of them tried to argue the case, but it was of no avail. The printing office was a two story brick building, and I don't think its destruction occupied over an hour."

"How many citizens were engaged in the affair?"

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“I suppose there must have been over a hundred, altogether.”

“Was there any personal violence or other indignities offered the Mormons at that time?”

“Nothing of any particular consequence. Several were knocked down, but as a general thing the Mormons had sufficient discretion to keep out of the way. Bishop Partridge and a saint named Wm. Allen, were taken from their houses and

## TARRED AND FEATHERED

upon the public square, but I am not sure whether it was done this same day or not, but am of the opinion that it was a few days after. After the excitement attending the destruction of the printing office had subsided, everything went along with comparative smoothness until sometime during the following October, when an outbreak occurred at Wilson’s store, near Big Blue, in which Lawyer Brazeale and a man named Lindell, citizens of Independence, and several Mormons were killed, and a number wounded on both sides. This affray seemed to precipitate the general uprising which had been brewing for several months and the next day a band of perhaps 150 Mormons organized and armed themselves in that neighborhood and started for Independence with the avowed intention of burning the town and to kill Col. Sam Owens, Gen. S. D. Lucas, myself and several other leading citizens who had taken part in the destruction of the printing office. We heard of their coming and I being at that time colonel of the state militia organized several hundred citizens of the county under my command in readiness to meet them. The Mormons were under the leadership of Elder Lyman White and were armed with a few guns, chisels fastened on the ends of poles, clubs, etc. The Mormons concealed themselves in the woods just west of town where I met them and finally

## MADE A TREATY

with them, the conditions of which were that they were to surrender their arms and leave the county within ten

days. They accepted the conditions of the treaty and surrendered and made a hurried flight from the county.”

“Was there any blood shed at this time?”

“I do not positively remember but don’t think there was.”

“Were the Mormons allowed to dispose of their lands and other property before they left the county?”

“No, they did not have time, but afterwards, a great many came back and disposed of their lands without molestation.”

“Did they own much property in the county?”

“Yes, they owned a large amount of land all over the county and a great deal of property in the town of Independence.”

“Are there any of the Mormons here now who were here at the time of the difficulties of 1833?”

“Only two that I know of, Dr. W. E. McLellan and his wife. At the time of the difficulty at Wilson’s store, I had Dr. McLellan and another man under arrest upon a charge of some misdemeanor, I don’t remember just what, preferred by one Richard McCarty and their trial was in progress when the news of the battle at Wilson’s was received, and I had hard work to protect them during the excitement. I placed them in jail until the next day and then turned them loose and told them to “git” which they did in short order. Dr. McLellan came back here about [fifteen] years ago and he and I often talk over the events of those troublesome times. The doctor was always a very peaceable and law-abiding man and very well liked by everybody during his residence here in 1831-2-3.”

“Colonel, after reflecting calmly over these troubles for almost half a century, do you believe that the citizens were justifiable in mistreating and

## DRIVING THE MORMONS FROM THE COUNTY?”

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“I do not think they ought to have been unnecessarily mistreated, but I think the people were entirely justifiable in driving them out, as we could not have lived with them in peace.”

“What became of the Mormons after they left Jackson county?”

“They scattered in almost every direction, the majority however, going to Clay county, where they lived for several years.”

“Did any of them ever come back [here]?”

“None of them ever came back here to live that I know of except Dr. McLellan; but they used to come back [occasionally] during the next few years after their expulsion, [to transact] business.”

“Did you have any trouble with them after [the first expulsion] in 1833?”

“No, we did not. About one year after we heard that they had organized in large numbers and intended coming back again. This rumor created intense excitement, and the whole county was organized under command of Col. Sam Owens, to repel them. But the report proved false.”

“Do you think, colonel, that the slavery question had anything to do with the difficulties with the Mormons?”

“No, I don’t think that matter had anything to do with it. The Mormons, it is true, were northern and eastern people, and “free soilers.” but they did not interfere with the negroes and we did not care whether they owned slaves or not.”

“Was anything ever done by the state authorities in regard to the expulsion of the Mormons?”

“Yes, I was arrested the next winter on a warrant issued by Gov. Duncan, on a charge of misdemeanor in office in driving the Mormons out of the county. I was taken to Richmond and tried by court martial and acquitted. My trial before the court of inquiry and court

martial occupied six or seven months and cost the state over \$30,000. About one thousand Mormons testified against me.”

“Do you know anything about the Mormons after they left this county?”

“No, I do not. They went to Caldwell county and were driven from there in 1838, but I don’t know anything about these troubles.”

“Did the Mormons practice polygamy or advocate polygamy while in Jackson county?”

“No, they did not. Polygamy, at that time, had not been heard of.”

Col. Pitcher is now upwards of 75 years of age, but time has dealt kindly with him. He is still robust and hearty, and would not ordinarily be taken for a man of over 65 years. He has resided within a few miles of Independence ever since he came to the state, 55 years ago, and is well-known to every old citizen in the county as well as to a majority of the younger ones. In the early times, however, his name was known all over the Western country. As a citizen he is well liked and highly respected by everybody, and his reputation for truth is strictly first class. Next Sunday’s Journal will contain another installment of the heretofore unwritten history of the Mormon settlement in and expulsion from Jackson county as related by other pioneer citizens.

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*Note: The above Col. Pitcher article was reprinted in various RLDS publications, including Part III, Chapter II of Rudolph Etzenhouser’s 1894 book, From Palmyra to Independence. Etzenhouser conveniently omits Dr. McLellan’s name in his reprint, as well as Col. Pitcher’s account of armed Mormons marching upon Independence, with plans to avenge the destruction of their printing office. In the RLDS literature of that day, the Missouri Saints were generally pictured non-aggressive victims, in all cases; while Apostle William McLellan was ignored as much as possible, due to his criticism of the RLDS and their “edited” version of Mormon history.*